

# Anger in Marriage

There's a major destroyer of love on the loose; I've found it to be the leading cause of divorce and the single greatest thief of one's love life. It may already be at work in your life and marriage.

This destroyer is forgotten, unresolved anger--not just the kind that gnaws at one's stomach night after night but also the type that quietly disappears. At least I used to think it disappeared. But when we bury anger inside us...it's always buried alive! Then, when we aren't even aware of its presence, it does its damage, destroying like rust on a car, like moths in a dark closet.

## **Anger is an emotion.**

Like all of our emotions, there's nothing wrong with it in and of itself. It's our human response to something that occurs, or at least to our perception of that occurrence. In fact, some anger is good; we should get angry when we see an injustice or when someone is trying to violate our personal property lines. In such cases, our anger is what motivates us to take appropriate action. But after anger motivates us to do something good, we can't afford to let it linger inside us. We have to get it out.

Dr. Howard Markman, a leading expert in the prevention of divorce, gives a strong warning about hidden anger. He reminds us that all those little discussions that just don't seem to get resolved and continually provoke an inappropriate outburst--issues that don't necessarily call for heated feelings, such as whether the toilet paper rolls from the top or the bottom or whether the toilet seat is up or down--are usually driven by anger that's just below the surface. No matter how many times a couple tries to resolve those issues or enter into deeper intimacy, the anger can keep them apart and in turmoil. Living with angry people is like living in a minefield. If you say or do the wrong thing, kaboom! They explode all over everyone. And you're left thinking, Oh, I had no idea that one thing I did would cause such a reaction.

Actually, anger is a secondary emotion, not a primary feeling. It arises out of fear, frustration, hurt, or some combination of these three. For example, if someone says something harsh to us we first feel hurt and then anger. When we strip the word anger down to its deepest level, we see a thread that runs through the entire book--unfulfilled expectations. Frustration is not receiving what we had expected from other people or from circumstances. We feel the need to blame our unhappiness on someone or something.

## **Anger is our choice.**

We choose to respond in anger when something happens to us that's outside of our control. It's a normal response, even a good response, when it's controlled. But we are the ones who choose to hold on to anger or let it go. We can choose to see its powerful potential for destruction and take the steps to reduce it within us. Otherwise it's an ice-berg sinking our love.



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